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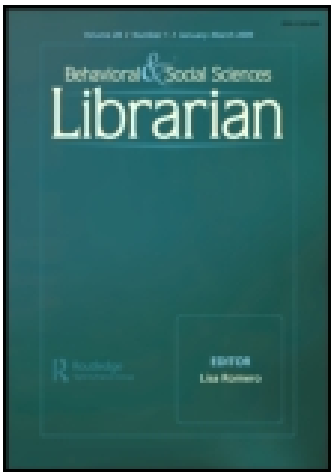


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# Science versus the Paranormal:

Joe Nickell [a]

[a] Senior Research Fellow, Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), Amherst, NY, 14228-2743

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# Science versus the Paranormal: An Annotated Bibliography

Joe Nickell

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Although we live in a time when rational, scientific thinking has given us astonishing benefits and luxuries–ranging from conquered diseases to instantaneous, worldwide communication and even space travel–there is an accompanying, alarming anti-science trend. One manifestation of this trend is the continuing public belief in so-called paranormal phenomena, including a panoply of "New Age" interests such as astrology, channeling spirit entities, reincarnation, mystical healing, psychic powers, UFO abductions, and the like. As well, there has been a recent increase in "miracle" claims–including "weeping" statues and silver rosaries that reportedly turn to gold–which extend faddish claims into the religious realm.

To assess such claims, an international organization was founded in 1976 by scientists and rationalist thinkers like Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, and Martin Gardner. Chaired by philosopher Paul Kurtz, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) encourages research, answers queries from individuals and the media, conducts workshops and seminars, and publishes a lively journal, the *Skeptical Inquirer*–all from its new science-center complex, the Center for Inquiry, in Amherst, New York. (For subscription/associate membership information call 1-800-634-1610.)

Given CSICOP's mission and Professor Kurtz's urging of the "need for public education in the aims of science," I therefore welcomed the invitation to produce this bibliography for *Behavioral & Social Sciences Librarian*. My intent has been to compile a selection of skeptical books that any good university or large public library should own.

Although I wish to thank Dr. Gordon Stein, Center for Inquiry library director, Barry Karr, Executive Director of CSICOP, and Ranjit Sandhu, staff researcher, for their helpful input, I take full responsibility for the

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Joe Nickell is Senior Research Fellow of the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), Amherst, NY 14228-2743.

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results. Such a compilation is necessarily somewhat personal, and another compiler would no doubt produce a different list. My own criteria in selecting a particular book have been authoritativeness (the author is an expert in his or her field), thorough critical focus (wishy-washy books are eschewed), comprehensiveness (a wide scope is preferred over a more narrow one), readability (the author's style is not overly dense), and availability (generally, the books are in print and easily affordable).

Regarding the latter point, since skeptical books do not sell nearly as well as their credulous counterparts, bookstore shelves may therefore be filled with the latter while lacking a single copy of the former. Nevertheless, despite the relatively small market, one publisher has become the premier issuer of skeptical works. It is for that reason (and not because it is my own publisher!) that I have included so many titles by Prometheus Books. (For their current free catalog dial 1-800-421-0351.)

I have divided the bibliography into the following subject areas: General Paranormal, Astrology, Cryptozoology, ESP and Psychics, Religious Phenomena, UFOs, and finally, a section on books for children.

## *GENERAL PARANORMAL*

Abell, George O. and Barry Singer, eds. *Science and the Paranormal: Probing the Existence of the Supernatural.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1983. A scientific response–by Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Martin Gardner, and others–to claims of such "unbelievable" phenomena as Kirlian auras, the Bermuda Triangle, psychic healing, astrology, "moon madness," UFOs, monsters and similar topics.

Baker, Robert A. *Hidden Memories: Voices and Visions from Within.* Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1992. Illuminating discussion of cryptomnesia, dispelling such claims as those involving alien abductions, channeling of spirits, and past-life regression as manifestations of altered memory storage.

Baker, Robert A. and Joe Nickell. *Missing Pieces: How to Investigate Ghosts, UFOs, Psychics & Other Mysteries.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1992. An introduction to major paranormal topics in the form of a handbook for investigators, with sections on the Psychology of Belief, Investigatory Tactics and Techniques, Getting at the Truth, Rules of Evidence, Tips from Magicians, Radio and Television Interviews, Libel and Slander, and many other topics.

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Frazier, Kendrick, ed. *Paranormal Borderlands of Science.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1981. First of a series featuring selected articles from *Skeptical Inquirer*, topics include Amityville Horror, biorhythms, phony psychics, astrology, "Chariots of the Gods," UFOs, cult archaeology and other fringe sciences.

___, ed. *Science Confronts the Paranormal.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1986. Additional collection of articles from *Skeptical Inquirer*, discussing coincidence, misperception, remote viewing, psychic detectives, Columbus poltergeist case, palmistry, Shroud of Turin, cryptozoology, and other topics.

___, ed. *The Hundredth Monkey and Other Paradigms of the Paranormal.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Third in series; focuses on Understanding the Human Need, Encouraging Critical Thinking, and Evaluating the Anomalous Experience, as well as examining paranormal claims involving parapsychology, spontaneous human combustion, astrology, medical controversies, and crashed-saucer claims.

Gardner, Martin. *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science.* 1952; revised ed. New York: Dover Books, 1957. A classic text, debunking in lively fashion everything from quack medicine to crank scientific theories (ranging from flat-and hollow-earth notions to claims of ESP and flying saucers).

___. *Science: Good, Bad and Bogus.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Collection of the famous science writer's articles and reviews, focusing on such areas as ESP, psychic surgery, eyeless vision, biorhythms, faith healing, "Close Encounters," etc.; discussions of Conan Doyle, alleged psychokinetic marvel Uri Geller, medium Arthur Ford, and various crank scientists.

___. *The New Age: Notes of a Fringe Watcher.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. Critical but entertaining collection of essays exposing modern "New Age" phenomena as merely repackaged pseudoscience.

Gordon, Henry. *Extrasensory Deception: ESP, Psychics, Shirley MacLaine, Ghosts, UFOs . . .* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987. Wide-ranging skeptical look at "psychic" powers, prophecy, poltergeists and spirits, superstitions, auras, eyeless vision, extraterrestrials, healing techniques, and much, much more, presented in brief, concise discussions.

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___. *Channeling into the New Age: The "Teachings" of Shirley MacLaine and Other Such Gurus*. Foreword by Isaac Asimov. New York: Prometheus Books, 1988. Critical analysis of the New Age Movement, including channeling, astral projection, crystal and herbal healing, astrology, and other aspects.

Harris, Melvin. *Investigating the Unexplained*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1986. A noted British broadcaster's careful examination of psychic detectives, clairvoyant dreams, the "Amityville Horror," and numerous other allegedly paranormal mysteries–with the result that the true facts in the cases are quite different than had been popularly reported.

Hines, Terence. *Pseudoscience and the Paranormal*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988. Comprehensive overview of the paranormal, covering most subjects including psychic phenomena, reincarnation, astrology, UFOs, faith healing, and others; also discusses such non-paranormal pseudoscientific topics as graphology, psychoanalysis, and subliminal perception.

Nickell, Joe, with John F. Fischer. *Secrets of the Supernatural: Investigating the World's Occult Mysteries*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988. Investigative scrutiny of various cases exhibiting such paranormal claims as spontaneous human combustion, spirit pictures, synchronicity, and dowsing; includes such classic cases as the Barbados coffins mystery, the Image of Guadalupe, the Mackenzie House haunting, and the case of the two "Will Wests."

Randi, James. *Flim-Flam! The Truth About Unicorns, Parapsychology, and Other Delusions*. 1980: reprinted Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987. Thoroughgoing debunking of a variety of paranormal claims–including the Cottingley fairy photos, "ancient astronauts," psychic surgery, dowsing, levitation, and other claims–many as the result of first-hand investigation by the author, a noted magician and psychic investigator.

___. *An Encyclopedia of Lies, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural: James Randi's Decidedly Skeptical Definitions of Alternate Realities*. New York: St. Martins' Press, 1995. Introduction by Arthur C. Clarke. Wide-ranging compendium of the paranormal, concisely discussing topics from Abaris (a Scythian magician) to Zombie.

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Stein, Gordon, ed. *The Encyclopedia of the Paranormal.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996. Comprehensive reference work on paranormal claims, written from a scientific, investigative perspective by noted experts in the various fields.

## *ASTROLOGY*

Benski, Claude et al. *The "Mars Effect."* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995. An examination of the claims of the late Michel Gauquelin whose research purported to show that there are planetary influences on a person's achievement, specifically that persons born when Mars is particularly located in relation to the earth have a greater than chance probability of becoming a sports champion.

Culver, R. B., and P. A. Ianna. *The Gemini Syndrome: A Scientific Evaluation of Astrology*, revised ed. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984. A scientific response to the modern resurgence of interest in astrology and a critical examination of astrologers' claims.

Randi, James. *The Mask of Nostradamus: The Prophecies of the World's Most Famous Seer.* 1990; reprinted Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993. Biography of the famous astrologer by a noted psychic investigator, revealing how vague phraseology and other means have helped to give undue credibility to Nostradamus' numerous prognostications.

## *CRYPTOZOOLOGY*

Binns, Ronald. *The Loch Ness Mystery Solved.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1983. A thorough debunking of the Scottish lake-creature myth.

Cohen, Daniel. *The Encyclopedia of Monsters.* New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1982. A wide-ranging, balanced, A-to-Z compendium of monsters of all types.

Heuvelmans, Bernard. *On the Track of Unknown Animals.* 1958; reprinted Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972. Scholarly, if not sufficiently skeptical, cryptozoologist's examination of the evidence for many animals whose existence have not been scientifically established, including the Australian *bunyip*, the Abominable Snowman, and the supposedly still extant Siberian mammoth.

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Napier, John. *Bigfoot: The Yeti and Sasquatch in Myth and Reality.* New York: E. P. Dutton, 1973. A primate biologist's largely skeptical look at the evidence for hairy, manlike creatures in Asia (the Abominable Snowman) and North America (Bigfoot).

## *ESP AND PSYCHICS*

Alcock, James. *Science and Supernature: A Critical Appraisal of Parapsychology.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. An experiment-by-experiment critique of the most significant parapsychological research, including that involving "remote-viewing" and random-event-generator studies.

Blackmore, Susan. *The Adventures of a Parapsychologist.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1986. Eyeopening account by a former "believer" tells how her repeated failure to find evidence for ESP and other paranormal phenomena led to increasing skepticism.

Christopher, Milbourne. *ESP, Seers & Psychics: What the Occult Really Is.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970. A professional magician/magic historican's look at the "occult" world, including extrasensory perception and psychic prognosticators like Jeane Dixon.

Hansel, C. E. M. *ESP and Parapsychology: A Critical Re-Evaluation.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1980. Expanded and updated version of the author's 1966 classic, *ESP: A Scientific Evaluation*; history and definitive critique of psychical research–now called parapsychology–including experiments in telepathy, clairvoyance, precognition, and psychokinesis.

Hyman, Ray. *The Elusive Quarry: A Scientific Appraisal of Psychic Research.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989. Penetrating critique of modern parapsychological experimentation by a noted research psychologist.

Kaye, Marvin. *The Handbook of Mental Magic.* New York: Stein and Day, 1975. A magician's guide to performing mind-reading tricks, making predictions, and executing other forms of "mentalism" (the performance of pretended psychic powers).

Kurtz, Paul, ed. *A Skeptic's Handbook of Parapsychology.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1985. Collection of critical essays by renowned

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authorities on parapsychology, including proponents who reply to their critics; the latter discuss widespread fraud on the part of both *"psychics"* and researchers, the question of whether parapsychology is a science or pseudoscience, and various methodological and theoretical issues.

Marks, David, and Richard Kammann. *The Psychology of the Psychic.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1980. Critical examination of "remote viewing," and other parapsychological claims, focusing particularly on the methods employed by alleged psychics–notably Uri Geller, and mentalists, particularly Kreskin.

Nickell, Joe, ed. *Psychic Sleuths: ESP and Sensational Cases.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994. Research by a team of investigative writers into the claims of alleged psychic detectives, yielding entirely negative results; afterward by psychologist James E. Alcock sums up the investigative conclusions.

Randi, James. *The Truth About Uri Geller.* 1975; reprinted Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982. Originally titled *The Magic of Uri Geller*, an aggressive debunking of a famous "psychic" who claims to bend metal, read minds, "teleport" objects, and perform other wonders with purely mental powers.

Stein, Gordon. *The Sorcerer of Kings: The Case of Daniel Dunglas Home and William Crookes.* Foreword by James Randi. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993. Discussion of Home's becoming one of the best-known spiritualists of his day–through various tricks revealed in this book–and his being investigated by a noted, if credulous, scientist who thought him genuine.

## *RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA*

Edwards, Paul. *Reincarnation.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1996. Detailed examination of the evidence for and against reincarnation, providing alternative explanations for such phenomena as deja-vu and child prodigies and including a chapter on the famous Bridey Murphy case.

Godfrey, Laurie, ed. *Scientists Confront Creationism.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1983. Scientific refutation of creationists' claims and presentation of the case for evolution.

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Kurtz, Paul. *The Transcendental Temptation: A Critique of Religion and the Paranormal.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Examination of the human tendency toward "magical thinking," demonstrating similarities between modern paranormal beliefs and those of major religions.

Larue, Gerald A. *The Supernatural, the Occult and the Bible.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. Examination of occult and supernatural beliefs, together with their biblical underpinnings, by a distinguished bible scholar.

Nickell, Joe. *Inquest on the Shroud of Turin,* second updated edition. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1988. Thorough debunking of a myriad of "Holy Shroud" claims, with details of the reported forger's confession, presence of paint pigments, and the results of radiocarbon testing which yielded a medieval date.

___. *Looking for a Miracle: Weeping Icons, Relics, Stigmata, Visions & Healing Cures.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1993. Examination of miracle claims including "Miraculous Pictures," "bleeding" and "weeping" icons, "incorruptible" bodies of saints, speaking in tongues, levitation, faith healing, and other strange events, powers, and objects.

Randi, James. *The Faith Healers.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1987. A devastating indictment of faith-healing charlatans and their tricks, based on an in-depth investigation by a team of researchers using such techniques as disguise and infiltration.

Zimdars-Swartz, Sandra L. *Encountering Mary: From La Salette to Medjugorje.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991. A scholarly, phenomenological approach to the study of Marian apparitions; while attempting to be unbiased, it is necessarily skeptical given the weight of the evidence.

## *SPIRITS*

Brandon, Ruth. *The Spiritualists: The Passion for the Occult in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* 1983; reprinted Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1984. Complete history of the spiritualist movement, featuring the conflict between believers and doubters.

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Cohen, Daniel. *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts.* New York: Dorset Press, 1984. Evenhanded look at ghosts and ghostly phenomena, including spirit photographs, with entries on most famous hauntings.

Houdini, Harry. *A Magician Among the Spirits.* 1924; reprinted Richmond, VA: Time-Life Books, 1991. History and exposé of spiritualism by one of its most ardent and knowledgeable critics; explains spirit photography, slate writing, and similar spirit phenomena, and discusses such figures as the Fox sisters, the Devanport brothers, D. D. Home, Eusapia Palladino, and others.

Keene, M. Lamar (as told to Allen Spraggett). *The Psychic Mafia.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976. An invaluable exposé of the modern-day spiritualist camps, like Indiana's Camp Chesterfield, by a reformed seance medium: contains many colorful anecdotes as well as explanations for such fake phenomena as "spirit precipitations on silk," levitating trumpets, etc.

Mulholland, John. *Beware Familiar Spirits.* 1938; reprinted New York: Scribner's, 1979. A magician's explanations of the trickery employed by fraudulent spiritualist mediums.

Nickell, Joe. *Entities: Angels, Spirits, Demons, and Other Alien Beings.* Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995. Investigative look at such alleged beings as ghosts, poltergeists, and demons of the *Amityville Horror* variety; afterward by psychologist Robert A. Baker discusses the need to believe in such mystical phenomena.

## *STRANGE PHENOMENA*

Cohen, Daniel. *The Encyclopedia of the Strange.* New York: Dorset, 1989 (originally 1985). Compendium of strange mysteries divided into seven sections: Ancient Places, Unknown Places (such as Atlantis), Strange People, Weird Talents (like dowsing), Natural Mysteries, Mysteries of Magic (including the Indian Rope Trick) and Classic Mysteries (such as Bermuda Triangle and King Tut's Curse).

Corliss, William R. *The Unexplained: A Sourcebook of Strange Phenomena.* New York: Bantam, 1976. A serious discussion of such phenomena–real or alleged–as "dark days," strange rainfalls, toads in rocks,

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Scotland's vitrified forts, the "lost" planet Vulcan, fossil Human Footprints.

Feder, Kenneth L. *Frauds, Myths & Mysteries: Science and Pseudoscience in Archaeology.* Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co., 1990. Authoritative application of the scientific method to such archaeological topics as the Nazca lines, psychic archaeology, Noah's Ark, the Cardiff Giant, and the like.

Kusche, Lawrence David. *The Bermuda Triangle Mystery–Solved.* 1975; reprinted Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1986. Painstaking research that reveals the non-paranormal causes of ship and plane disappearances in the so-called Devil's Triangle.

Schnabel, Jim. *Round in Circles: Poltergeists, Pranksters, and the Secret History of the Cropwatchers.* 1993; reprinted Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994. Anatomy of a modern hoax that began as a practical joke by two elderly pranksters then mushroomed into a "mystery" that captured the world's attention and attracted countless imitators.

Scot, Reginald. *The Discoveries of Witchcraft.* 1584; reprinted New York: Dover, 1972. Although written in the sixteenth century, a surprisingly modern-seeming view of the black arts by a witness to witch-hunting mania.

Vogt, W. Z. and Ray Hyman. *Water Witching U.S.A.* Second edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979. A scientific examination of claims for the efficacy of dowsing–the use of divining rods and pendulums to supposedly locate water (and occasionally other substances).

### *UFOs*

Condon, Edward U., and Daniel S. Gillmor, eds. *Final Report of the Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects.* New York: Bantam Books, 1969. Official report by the director of the scientific study of the U.S. Air Force's Office of Aerospace Research, 1966-68; major conclusion was that there was no scientific benefit to be garnered from further UFO studies.

Hendry, Allan. *The UFO Handbook: A Guide to Investigating, Evaluating and Reporting UFO Sightings.* New York: Doubleday, 1979. Although

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written by a member of a UFO organization, a largely skeptical view, demonstrating that the overwhelming number of UFO reports are actually IFOs (which are termed "UFO imposters").

Klass, Philip J. *UFOs Explained.* New York: Random House, 1974. Utilization of the scientific approach to convert UFOs into IFOs (identified flying objects such as aircraft, comets, balloons, and other aerial phenomena).

___. *UFOs: The Public Deceived.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1983. Refutation of claims that the United States government is covering up evidence of UFOs.

___. *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Boos, 1988. Definitive, book-length treatment of alleged alien kidnappings written by an internationally known skeptic.

Oberg, James E. *UFOs & Outer Space Mysteries: A Sympathetic Skeptic's Report.* Norfolk Beach, VA: Donning, 1982. A science writer's critique of UFO research and such related enigmas as the Tunguska event (a great explosion over Siberia in 1908) and moon myths.

Ruppelt, Edward J. *The Report on Unidentified Flying Objects.* New York: Ace Books, 1956. Unofficial report on UFOs by the chief of the Air Force Project Blue Book, based solely on official U.S. Air Force records and offering generally negative conclusions.

Sheaffer, Robert. *The UFO Verdict: Examining the Evidence.* Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1986. Comprehensive, critical view of the evidence for extraterrestrial visitations, including alleged sightings, photographs, and abductions; examines "classic" cases and discusses the UFO "mythology."

Story, Ronald D. *The Encyclopedia of UFOs.* Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980. Balanced compendium of UFO types, cases, proponents, contactees, and related phenomena; well illustrated.

Thiering, Barry, and Edgar Castle. *Some Trust in Chariots.* Toronto: Popular Library, 1972. Sweeping rebuttal of the notion–advanced by Erich von Daniken's *Chariots of the Gods*? (1971)–that extraterrestrials anciently visited the planet Earth and were responsible for such wonders as the pyramids and the great stone statues on Easter Island.

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### *FOR CHILDREN*

Barker, Dan. *Maybe Yes, Maybe No: A Guide for Young Skeptics*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990. Introduction to skeptical thinking for young readers.

Gibson, Walter. *Secrets of Magic, Ancient and Modern*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1967. Revelations of the secrets of magicians (like sawing a woman in half), mediums (including seance table rapping), and mystics (such as firewalking); illustrated with drawings and simple diagrams that help to explain the tricks.

Nickell, Joe, ed. *The Magic Detectives: Join Them in Solving Strange Mysteries*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989. Selection of thirty alleged paranormal mysteries–like the Amityville Horror, King Tut's curse, and Bridey Murphey's reincarnation–written in whodunit style with solutions printed upside down; teaches critical thinking and appreciation for science.

Ruchlis, Hy. *How Do You Know It's True? Discovering the Difference Between Science and Superstition*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991. Promotion of the scientific approach over magical thinking.

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